The establishment of the High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition (HLPE). Shared, independent and comprehensive knowledge for international policy coherence in food security and nutrition

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DOCUMENTS DE TRAVAIL / WORKING PAPERS

No 30-2011

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April 2011

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Abstract

Following the 2007-2008 food crisis, improvements of world food governance was at the centre of international discussions, leaning towards a new Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. In this process, the issue of the management of various streams of knowledge appeared a central element to allow for better policy coordination, and led to the creation of the High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition (HLPE). Here we describe the genesis and unveil the rationale underneath the creation of this expert process aiming at a better shared understanding of food insecurity of its causes and of potential remedies, and at helping policy-makers to look forward to emerging issues. Drawing lessons from other international expert processes at the interface between expertise and decision-making, we describe the internal rules of the expertise process, as well as the "boundary rules" that frame relations and exchanges between the expert body and decision makers, and show how critical the "fine-tuning" of those rules is not only for the expert process, but also, for the political negotiation platform itself.

Keywords **:** Food security; Food governance; High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition; Committee on World Food Security; Science-policy interface; HLPE; CFS

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La création du Groupe d'experts de haut niveau sur la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition (HPLE). Construire une connaissance partagée, indépendante et globale pour la cohérence internationale des politiques de sécurité alimentaire et de nutrition

Résumé

Suite à la crise alimentaire de 2007-2008, la réforme de la gouvernance alimentaire mondiale a été au centre des discussions internationales, orientées vers la création d'un partenariat mondial pour l'agriculture, la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition. Dans ces débats, la question de la confrontation des courants de connaissances a été identifiée comme élément déterminant pour permettre une meilleure coordination des politiques. Ceci a conduit à la création du Groupe d'experts de haut niveau sur la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition (HLPE). Nous décrivons ici la genèse et les sous-jacents de ce panel d'experts qui vise à une compréhension partagée de l'insécurité alimentaire, de ses causes et des remèdes possibles, et qui ambitionne d'aider les décideurs à anticiper les questions émergeantes. En tirant les leçons d'autres processus internationaux d'expertise à l'interface entre science et décision (GIEC, IAASTD), nous décrivons les règles internes du HLPE, ainsi que ses règles qui définissent son interface avec les organes de décision. Nous soulignons l'importance que revêtent ces règles, jusque dans leur détail, tant pour le processus d'expertise lui-même, que pour le bon fonctionnement de la plate-forme de négociation politique.

Mots-clés : sécurité alimentaire, gouvernance alimentaire, Groupe d'experts de haut niveau sur la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition, Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale, interface Science-Politique, HPLE, CSA

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Following the 2007-2008 food crisis, improvements of world food governance was at the centre of international discussions, leaning towards a new Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. In this process, the issue of the management of various streams of knowledge appeared a central element to allow for better policy coordination, and led to the creation of the High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition (HLPE). Here we describe the genesis and unveil the rationale underneath the creation of this expert process aiming at a better shared understanding of food insecurity of its causes and of potential remedies, and at helping policy-makers to look forward to emerging issues. Drawing lessons from other international expert processes at the interface between expertise and decision-making, we describe the internal rules of the expertise process, as well as the "boundary rules" that frame relations and exchanges between the expert body and decision makers, and show how critical the "fine-tuning" of those rules is not only for the expert process, but also, for the political negotiation platform itself.

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Introduction

The establishment of the High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition (HLPE), as part of the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), is the result of intense discussions about improving world food governance following the 2007-2008 food crisis. The creation of the HLPE acknowledges the need, given the multidisciplinary complexity of food security, for a dedicated scientific body to progress towards a better shared understanding of both problems and potential solutions.

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This paper aims at describing the genesis of the HLPE as well as its design. We elicitate reasons behind choices made by the international community in agreeing on the panel's internal and boundary rules. We show how the positioning, missions, structure, and procedures of the HLPE have been designed in a pursuit for quality, legitimacy, transparency and openness of expert input towards a revitalized CFS. We also discuss some challenges ahead.

I) Genesis

1) Towards a Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

The food price crisis of 2007-2008 has increased food insecurity, sometimes dramatically, making it much more visible. It has thus revealed long term failures in the functioning of the world food system (von Braun J. 2009), and triggered the wakening up of the international community regarding the so-far downgraded placement of agriculture and food security issues on the political agenda. From April 2008, international meetings were held to coordinate national and international responses to the crisis and discuss about a new governance for food security (de Schutter O. 2008; Golay C. 2010).

Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General, mobilized the UN Agencies through the launch in April 2008 of a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF). The HLTF led by himself and by FAO's Director-General Jacques Diouf, Vice-Chair, brings together the heads of 22 UN agencies and international organizations, tasked by Ban Ki-Moon to propose a unified response to the food price crisis and a global strategy and action plan. This resulted in the publication of the HLTF's Comprehensive Framework of Action (High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, 2008) which identified two sets of actions, called the "twin-track approach": "Meeting immediate needs of vulnerable populations" and "Building longer-term resilience and contributing to global food and nutrition security", with a third series of actions aiming at strengthening "Global information and monitoring systems."

The World Bank, which just started to reposition agriculture and rural development at the center of its concerns with the release of the 2008 World Development Report, the first in a quarter of century on these issues, proposed in April 2008 a "new deal for global food policy" (Zoellic 2008a) then further precised in a 10-point plan for the food crisis (Zoellic 2008b).

The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, announced on the 18th of April 2008 the idea of a "Global Partnership for Food and Agriculture", then discussed with the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization. This idea has been further elaborated in France with all interested ministries and NGO's (Lagandré 2009). The proposal presented by the French President during the High-Level Conference on World Food Security organised by FAO in June 2008 was composed of three pillars. The first one is to enhance international coordination, involving all international organisations, states, private sector and NGOs. The second one is to create an international multidisciplinary group of scientists to inform policy decisions. The third one is to upscale finances devolved to the fight against food insecurity (Sarkozy N. 2008).

This proposal of a Global Partnership for Food and Agriculture has been taken up by the G8 leaders in their statement on Global Food Security at the Hokkaido Toyako Summit on the 8th

of July 2008. "The UN should facilitate and provide coordination. As part of this partnership, a global network of high-level experts on food and agriculture would provide science-based analysis and highlight needs and future risks" (G8 2008). At the July 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila pledges were made towards a goal of mobilizing $20 billion over three years through a comprehensive strategy focused on sustainable agriculture development (G8 2009). The Pittsburgh summit of the 24 and 25 of September 2009 called on the World Bank to develop a multilateral trust fund to that intent (G20 2009). These initiatives, being framed essentially by the G8, raised some concerns in the G 77 and NGO's, traditionally favouring discussions being held inside the UN system, where every country has the same voting power, rather than in fora which primarily represent donor countries, or where the voting power much depends on contributions, such as in the World Bank. The action group on erosion, technology and concentration (ETC) has been especially active in denouncing the "spectre of the G-8's Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security", proposing instead, since January 2008, a "Roman New Forum", combining FAO, WFP, IFAD and the CGIAR (ETCgroup 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).

How the UN would facilitate the coordination of the GPAFS and what was exactly the GPAFS remained an issue of substantial discussion and interrogations as shown by the organisation of a side event on the GPAFS during the CFS in October 2008 (FAO Conference 2009), but one of the commonly understood principle of the GPAFS was that it should build on more inclusive policy making and policy coordination processes involving state and non state actors in a joint dynamic.

2) Towards the reform of the Committee on World Food Security

At the time of the crisis in 2007/2008, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), a technical committee of FAO, was on paper the international body where food security issues were discussed. It was composed of member States, members of FAO, WFP, IFAD or of the United Nations. It has been established following the World Food Conference of 1974 to monitor demand, supply and stocks of staple foods, review efforts made by governments and submit periodic and special reports to the World Food Council, created at the same time and suppressed in 1992, as the single UN body having ever being dismantled (Shaw 2007). The CFS was also in charge of monitoring the Plan of Action decided at the World Food Summit of 1996. The efficiency of CFS, before its reform, to effectively complete this task has been criticised by civil society, especially because some member states were not submitting reports and because the reports submitted were not communicated to the public (Windfuhr et al. 2009). Many had identified the CFS as a mostly devitalized body (Nabarro and Valente 2009). This lead to interrogations as how the GPAFS should materialize: building on the CFS and renewing it in depth? Or creating a new, separate institution or platform?

At its thirty fourth session, 14-17 October 2008, the CFS reacted timidly by examining complementary options for enhancing civil society participation in CFS policy debates (CFS 2008a) and "proposals to strengthen the Committee on World Food Security to meet new challenges" which were essentially of a procedural nature (CFS 2008b). This move was however not decisive, and did not suffice to then guarantee that the CFS would play a substantial role in the emerging GPAFS.

At the thirty fifth special session of the FAO Conference, convened in November 2008 to accelerate the reform of the organization, the Director General, in his opening speech, stated the "need to devise a global system that is better suited to the new challenges of food

security" (Diouf 2008). He made the case for CFS, underlining that it "is open to all Member Nations of FAO and the UN and to representatives of other international agencies, NGOs, civil society and the private sector" and emphasizing that "in order to fully implement its mandated role, the CFS needs to be enhanced as a system of governance of world food security" and that "the formation of a global network of high-level experts on food and agriculture would strengthen CFS expertise", finally linking CFS with the Global Partnership for World Food Security. In a conference background document (FAO Conference 2008a) emphasizing the key role of FAO in the strengthening of global information and monitoring systems FAO declared itself "ready to put together the high-level expert group". The FAO Conference welcomed the proposal and requested the FAO Secretariat to prepare terms of reference for the HLPE (FAO Conference 2008b). The 2008 FAO Conference endorsed the need to "revitalize CFS's role" as part of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA, Action 2.63) for FAO renewal. But no real progress was made as to what the GPAFS would be, how it would relate to FAO and the CFS, and what would be the role and positioning of a future HLPE with respect to existing institutions.

Nevertheless, at the end of 2008, the international food security governance system was becoming increasingly heated by the perspective of a substantive reconfiguration. It is in that climate that the Madrid high-level meeting on food security for all was convened on the 26 and 27 January 2009 by the Government of Spain and the United Nations, and attended by almost 60 ministers, heads of all Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP), Bioversity International for the CGIAR, UNICEF, representatives from the World Bank, regional banks, regional intergovernmental organizations, bilateral agencies, and representatives from farmer organizations, civil society and private sector including foundations. While mainly focused on the Comprehensive Framework for Action, the Madrid meeting marked one further step on the way towards the GPAFS and the creation of more inclusive governance processes. In Madrid, UN's Secretary-General welcomed "the suggestion of a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security that is truly inclusive and broad based." (BanKi-Moon 2009). Although based on diverging motivations, a general consensus was rapidly reached, amongst governments and other stakeholders, international organizations and CSOs/NGOs, that the GPAFS should not imply the creation of new institutions, but should build on existing bodies that would have to be reformed. The Final statement of the Madrid Conference, reflecting the chair's summary, mentioned agreement on the importance of an inclusive and broad process of consultation, including the establishment of "a representative contact group, accountable to all interested partners" (Statement of the Madrid High-level meeting on food security 2009).

During the Madrid Conference, the FAO Director-General made two moves to position the FAO and the CFS towards the centre of gravity of the up-coming GPAFS. First, he recalled that the FAO Conference requested that the CFS be able "to fully play its role in the new system of global governance" (Diouf 2009). Second, he announced the beginning of a discussion, by FAO's initiative, on the terms of reference for the HLPE, scientific pillar of the GPAFS. This initiative was not challenged because of the accepted function of FAO as a knowledge-based organization. Did the Madrid high level meeting strengthen the idea that the process of the creation of the GPAFS could be dealt with under the reform of the CFS? At least it did not go against it and set the requirements that such a reform shall meet: a profound revitalization was obviously needed should the CFS be able to be attributed a "central" role in the GPAFS: namely to be able to confront and build common understanding through enhanced inclusiveness and participation. David Nabarro, coordinator of the HLTF remarked that "the inspired decision was to introduce this thinking in the discussion about the new role of the CFS" (Nabarro D. 2009).

The CFS seized this opportunity. First, it took special care to ensure adequate participation of all stakeholders in its renewal process, called at the 2008 FAO Conference. A "Contact Group to assist with renewal of the CFS" was created to advise the Chair and Bureau of CFS in that process. The similarity with the Madrid wording is not a coincidence. This participatory process included representatives from FAO membership, WFP, IFAD, Bioversity International (CGIAR), the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and representatives of civil society, non governmental organizations and the private sector, among which representatives of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), La Via Campesina, Oxfam, Action Aid and the ad hoc group of international NGOs (Kolmans and Paasch 2010). Second, the CFS contact group decided to bring underneath its umbrella the debate on the creation of the High Level Panel of Experts. This work was up to this date following a separate process merely driven by the FAO Secretariat as explained above. It was formally integrated to the CFS' reform process by a decision of FAO's Council in June 2009 (FAO Council 2009). By these two essential moves: (i) reproducing in its own reform process the major characteristic – inclusiveness – unanimously claimed as a goal for the future GPAFS and the renewed governance of the global world food system, and (ii) annexing the debates on renewed expert input, the CFS, if not in itself, but at least its corridors, managed to secure its position as the place of debates on the reform of the international governance of world food security.

3) The reform of CFS

Many stakeholders (Nabarro and Valente 2009) highlighted the challenge to reform the CFS in order to "revitalizing" it. In October 2009, a substantive reform was adopted by the CFS at its 35th session, in the aim to make it as "the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings" (CFS 2009). CSOs and NGOs have been very active in the whole process, including during the 35th session where the reform document has been adopted (ETCgroup 2009b).

CFS's renewed roles are to provide a platform for discussion and coordination among all relevant stakeholders, to promote greater policy convergence and coordination, to support and advice countries and regions. In a second phase it will take on additional roles such as coordination at national and regional levels, promote accountability and share best practices at all levels, develop a Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition.

An essential element is the enlargement of its composition and modification of organisation to ensure that it is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. The Committee is composed of member states, participants and observers. Member states are encouraged to participate in such a way as to represent as possible an inter-ministerial position.

Participants can also intervene in plenary and breakout discussions, contribute to preparation of documents and agendas, present documents and formal proposals. They include representatives of:

1. UN agencies and bodies with a specific mandate in food security and nutrition such as FAO, IFAD, WFP, the HLTF, and of other UN bodies whose work is related to attaining food security, nutrition and the right to food, such as the Special Rapporteur

on the Right to Food, the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN).
2. Civil society and non-governmental organizations and their networks with strong relevance to issues of food security and nutrition with particular attention to organizations representing smallholder family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, herders/pastoralists, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers, Indigenous Peoples, and International NGOs whose mandates and activities are concentrated in the areas of concern to the Committee.
3. International agricultural research systems, such as through representatives of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and others.
4. International and regional Financial Institutions including World Bank, International Monetary Fund, regional development banks and World Trade Organization (WTO).
5. Private sector associations and private philanthropic foundations active in the areas of concern to the Committee.

Observers, such as regional associations of countries, regional intergovernmental development institutions, local, national, regional CSOs/NGOs, may be invited by the chair to intervene during sessions.

An Advisory Group, composed of representatives of FAO, WFP, IFAD and other non member Participants provides continuing input to the Bureau regarding the tasks which the CFS Plenary has instructed it to perform.

The reform finally creates the *High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition*, describing its key functions, structure and modus operandi, output, and composition, including selection procedure (CFS 2009).

The World Summit on Food Security in Rome on the 16-18 November 2009 and the Parallel Forum organized by the civil society were an occasion to react on the "just-reformed" CFS, and to its positioning with respect to the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (Kolmans and Paasch 2010). The final Declaration of the Summit acknowledged CFS as a "central component of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition" (World Summit on Food Security 2009). The Global Partnership is to ensure inclusiveness of participation and promote a "genuine bottom-up approach based on field-level experiences and developments." The Declaration "therefore welcomes the efforts of CFS to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders – particularly those most affected by food insecurity – are heard." It supports the roles of CFS and the creation of the High Level Panel of Experts. The Declaration from Social Movements/NGOs/CSOs at the Parallel Forum also supports the renewed CFS and took note of the declaration of the summit (CSO Forum 2009).

Thus as one commentator puts it "both gatherings rejoiced over the recent reform of the CFS [...] The inclusion of civil society voices was seen all around to be a positive development" (Clapp 2009). Even a critic of the World Summit such as Matt Grainger, head of media at Oxfam International, noted that "Although not headline-friendly, the empowerment of the CFS was a significant result from the Rome Summit; indeed, it could one day prove to have been historic" (Grainger 2010).

II) Common understanding as a key objective

Enhancing common understanding of the issues and rationales around agriculture, food security and nutrition, has been a central issue all along the discussions about improving the global governance of food security. The proposal to create a high-level panel of experts responded to the need to improve the way knowledge is conveyed to multi stake-holder political platforms. It also plays a role in the political platform itself, enabling the CFS to perform an "essential collective learning function" (de Schutter 2009c).Indeed the question on "how to handle knowledge" was central to the discussion on how to reform CFS, both because (i) of the nature of the concept of food security at international level, and (ii) of the particular nature of the necessary linkages between knowledge and decisions around the same issue.

In the following we show how peculiarities of the food security and nutrition concept, and its evolution over time, contributed to define this need for a novel treatment and consideration of knowledge.

1) Food security: knowledge implications of an expanding concept

Food insecurity is a global and persistent issue, recurrently highlighted by crises. It manifests itself in various ways in the different regions of the world and it has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. It has many facets and is interlinked with many other problems and factors from local to international levels, from social security related issues to development issues.

The very definition of food security has considerably evolved since the 1974 World Food Conference, as an evidence of the evolution and expansion of the concept itself, and as a result of the ensuing need to integrate the various dimensions of a concept always at risk of fragmentation. From being initially focused on food availability, it has gradually developed in a broader concept emphasizing the crucial dimension of accessibility and the importance of nutrition and food preferences (Pinstrup-Andersen 2009). The definition agreed upon at the World Food Summit in 1996 is that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life (FAO, 1996). This definition considerably enlarges the perspectives, from a focus on agricultural production to much broader economic, social and environmental topics. D. Shaw (2007) represents food security as three concentric circles, the third one encompassing such issues as globalization, sustainable development and human rights. S. Maxwell (1996) identifies three main shifts in thinking food security since 1974, from the global and the national to the household and the individual, from a food first perspective to a livelihood perspective, and from objective indicators to subjective perception. He argues that "understanding food security requires explicit recognition of complexity and diversity, and that it necessarily privileges the subjective perceptions of the food insecure themselves." He also went further (Maxwell S., Slater R. 2004), noting that there is a need for a new food policy, including food security issues but also food safety, obesity and nutrition related health issues, to deal with the changes in food systems. There is also a stronger concern for a better integration of nutritional considerations in food security (Shetty P. 2009). The way to express the relationships between nutrition and food security issues is still a matter of debate, an illustration of it is the "taxonomy" problem around "food security" and "nutrition", with 3 concurrent designations still used: "food security", where nutrition is implicit, "food security and nutrition", where it

is explicit but seems separated and "food and nutrition security", which aims to show it as embedded in food security. The necessity to better integrate the two, including institutionally, resulted in the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) being proposed and accepted as a member of the Advisory Group of the CFS at its 36th meeting in October 2010. Finally, the concept of the right to food has a growing influence, which has important consequences on the whole reflexion about food security (de Schutter 2009a). Its use as "a tool for analysis" leads to focus on who the vulnerable are and why they are food insecure (de Schutter 2009b).

This evolution towards a definition which is at the same time broader, more diverse, and more subjective testifies of an increasingly fragmented thinking. Food Security is to be considered by various disciplines, from environmental sciences and agronomics to economics and social sciences. They all have their own vision and focus, use their own concepts and methods. For most of them food security is not a central topic. Therefore each discipline is constructing a diverse interpretation, framed and focused by its own field.

As a consequence, food security is now on the agenda of a growing number of institutions, organizations, bilateral and multilateral aid and development agencies. For instance D. Shaw (2007) identifies thirty two United Nations bodies with an interest in food and nutrition security, each having its own mandate, its vision and focus. This creates two opposite movements: In one direction, being action oriented, each institution tend to focus on the specific solutions it can provide and to regress to sectoral issues and causes. In the other direction, as it is generally impossible for a single organization to cover all aspects of food security within the boundaries of its mandate, for practical reasons organizations also tend to sometimes act beyond they mandate, creating tensions as to possible overlaps. A side effect of this double conflicting movement is the "disarray" (Lele 2009) of the general architecture of international development assistance for food security. Sectoral specialisation of institutions, at both national and international levels is thus a major difficulty in addressing a broader non sectoral issue (Mahler 1997; de Schutter 2009c).

The necessity to encompass levels from the global to the individual identified by Maxwell (1996) imposes to consider various scales, from household to global, which is one more challenge for the various disciplines which have to consider food security issues. It also involves various categories of stakeholders, especially to take into account the "subjective perceptions of the food insecure themselves". This brings one more methodological challenge: how to account scientifically for subjective perceptions? It also requires to integrate other types of knowledge than science strictly speaking which raises the issue of their legitimacy regarding usual scientific criteria such as peer reviewing processes. To integrate these various understandings without compromising the legitimacy of the knowledge thus produced requires specific processes.

Finally the very evolution of the food security concept induces a growing number of approaches, each focusing on a particular aspect, irreducible to one another, leading to a growing difficulty to build a comprehensive, structured understanding of food security. This "decentralization", if not approached comprehensively, generates the risk of an inappropriate focusing on a single aspect, either to revert to the easiest, such as food production, or to shift to the more prominent at any given moment, preventing any long term consideration. This diversity of interpretation also increases uncertainties, both in the knowledge base and in the evaluation of potential effects of policies on the ground.

Measuring food insecurity is a good example. It is essential to monitor and inform action. Yet, it has become more and more difficult and uncertain to assess with the evolution of the concept (Pinstrup-Andersen 2009; Barret 2010). The most commonly used indicators are those related to food availability. But these are badly correlated to indicators of access or utilization, measured at household levels (Barret 2010), which are perceived as more pertinent as to the reality of food insecurity and malnutrition on the ground, though tools to widely monitor and predict food insecurity at household level are still lacking, often hindering the design and timely launch of appropriate policies.

This increasing complexity, multi-dimensionality and decentralization of food security issues has therefore strong consequences on the way policies should be conceived and on the way knowledge should be assembled and conveyed to that aim.

2) Disputed knowledge, disputed policies ?

Food security is, as we have just seen, a complex notion. It is also intrinsically a highly political one, both at national and international levels. Improving food security is one of the major goals of the international community, regularly reaffirmed. International organizations and rich countries are held accountable of their actions, both by developing countries and by civil society and NGOs. Feeding one's people is one of the primary objectives of any government, part of national sovereignty. It is thus essentially a national prerogative, even though food security is also more and more dependent on external factors, outside the reach of national governments. The notion of food sovereignty, promoted by small holders, and NGOs further stresses the idea of the capacity to produce nationally and to be accountable for it, with a resulting focus on agriculture. The creation and recognition at the international level of the notion of the right to food and its gradual integration in national legislations clarify responsibilities and accountability. Jennifer Clapp, comparing the World Summit on Food Security and the "People's Forum" (Clapp 2009), one focusing on food security, the other on food sovereignty, remarks that the right to food could be a way of bridging the gap between these two notions. This increasing pressure on accountability increases the political implications of both the identification of the causes of food insecurity and the monitoring of policies and measures to address them.

Many of the solutions proposed to enhance food security are highly contested, with technical debates often translating into strong political fights. For instance the move toward liberalisation of commodity markets in many developing countries is viewed by many as a key step for enhancing food security. Others view it as exposing small holders to greater risk and food insecurity (Ziervogel and Ericsen . 2010). As a result, political debates on this issue often reproduce the overall positions on trade issues. This degree of political controversies, of "fight of arguments" grounded on often complex reasoning chains, heavily contrasts with the blankness of internationally negotiated texts. Indeed, final documents generally do avoid accounting for these confrontations. They have to, as they are adopted by consensus. Commenting the document on the survey of worldwide food situation adopted by the World Food Conference of 1974, Alain Rondeau remarked that " this text –it is the rule of the exercise- far from choosing clearly between various types of possible explanations, operates among them an ambiguous synthesis which masks more than it surpasses divergences of appreciations" (Rondeau 1975).

For all these reasons, building a common understanding is absolutely necessary to ground action on a firm basis. It is necessary for governments to build upon for agreeing on action. It

is necessary for various organizations to build coordination across sectoral and institutional boundaries.

In that sense, "common understanding" does not mean common agreement on the political objectives or on measures to take to address a stream of causes, but rather means "sharing a common presentation of the different and sometimes competing causes of a problem and ways to deal with it in different contexts". When issues are particularly controversial (biofuels, GMOs ...), and when it proves impossible to share a vision, it is however important to disentangle controversies on a technical basis by commonly sharing their rationale and the information that support them. Paradoxically, it is exactly through fostering a stronger understanding of the relationships between competing political measures and their underlying technical and knowledge-based rationale, that the knowledge-process can manage to separate the discussion on political objectives from the technical discussion.

3) Two influential models: IPCC and the IAASTD

Two models of international expert bodies have been particularly influential in the reflexion on designing the HLPE: the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the International Assessment of the role of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD).

Since its inception the idea of an expert body as a scientific pillar to the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has been compared to the International Panel on Climate Change. The reference figured in the initial French proposal (Sarkozy N. 2008) and it has been highly influential in the discussions about the HLPE. The idea had already been raised before. In 1998, the International Council for Science (ICSU) discussed a study it had mandated (Hall D. O. 1998) in order to precise the role it could play in sciences for food security. The author has conducted 38 interviews with individuals including staff working in international intergovernmental organizations and NGOs. Considering that a key issue of relevance to ICSU was the possibility of providing independent and additional scientific inputs into food security research monitoring and policy. "It was suggested that an IPCC-like process was needed for food security to enhance the scientific background and then proceed in parallel with policy" (Hall 1998). The study concluded that ICSU could play an important and niche role in the sciences for food security. It mentioned the creation of an IPCC type of organization as a possible action. Several options were presented at this ICSU debate, among which "an IPCC-type process where a scientific synthesis is made of the state of the art. It is then used for policy recommendations and independent advice. It is an ongoing process with continuing updates". This option has not been elected but the discussion in itself is particularly relevant as ICSU had been very influential in the early stages of an international expert body on climate change, before the creation of the IPCC (Agrawala 1998a). The first reason for IPCC being a reference is certainly the fact that it is the better known of the international scientific bodies linked to an international negotiations or decision process. It is also because, despite recent controversies, it is considered a success (acknowledged by sharing the Peace Nobel Price in 2007) for informing climate policy and raising public awareness worldwide. And IPCC has indeed played a key role in shoring up credibility of climate change (Miller 2007; Rommetveit et al 2010) and in having it being recognised as an issue. This success has conveyed the idea that a scientific body could produce a "worldwide scientific analysis, objective and indisputable" (Sarkozy 2008).

In 2002 the World Bank announced the launch of an IPCC like study on agriculture which finally led to the IAASTD (World Bank 2002). It was presented as aiming to provide an open transparent assessment of issues such as genetically modified crops and organic farming to guide policy on agricultural production, food safety and food security, "broadly comparable to the IPCC". Interestingly, Robert Watson, the World Bank's chief scientist, who was leading on the initiative, was until a month before head of the IPCC. IAASTD has been a major reference in the reflexion about the constitution of the HLPE, especially promoted by NGO's and the civil society. The IAASTD, although initially presented by the World Bank as an IPCC in agriculture and food security, is structurally very different from the IPCC. The IPCC was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to conduct assessments of the scientific basis for understanding the risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts, and options for adaptation and mitigation. Governments, members states of WMO and UNEP agree on the scope of and outline of the reports, nominate authors, select scientific leaders of the process, review results and approve summaries for policymakers (Agrawala 1998a, 1998b). Whereas the IPCC was created as a permanent body, issuing reports on a regular, sequential, pluriannual basis, the IAASTD was from its onset a one-time, single-product assessment initiated by the World Bank and FAO. Whereas governments govern IPCC (they approve the summary for policy makers of IPCC reports in joint meetings), the Bureau of the IIASTD was also open to other stakeholders, (30 governments and 30 civil society representatives, including NGO's, producer and consumer groups, private sector and international organizations), in a geographically balanced way. The experts (about 400) were selected by the Bureau, following nominations by stakeholders groups. They worked in their own capacity and did not represent any particular stakeholder group (IAASTD 2009).

Three main factors explain the influence of IAASTD in the CFS reform and creation of HLPE. It has been working in the very field of agriculture and food security. It was an example of innovative participatory approaches involving a broad set of stakeholders, including those precisely targeted by the enlargement of the participation in CFS. And, as one may expect, some organizations, mainly NGO/CSOs, involved in the reflexion about the reform of CFS had also participated to the IAASTD, sometimes involving the same persons. Thus, unsurprisingly, in the discussion towards a reformed CFS and the creation of the HLPE, reference to the IAASTD was made both for its research results, especially in their reference to smallholders, and for its methodology of work (APRODEV, CIDSE 2009; de Schutter O. 2009a; CSO Forum 2009; Saragih H. 2009; Via Campesina 2010). In particular, NGOs and CSOs saw the CFS-HLPE processes, if properly designed, as a way to create the much expected but never found political and scientific "follow-up" to the IAASTD: first because the CFS and HLPE are "permanent" processes (whereas IAASTD was "one-shot"), second because the organic links between CFS and the HLPE guarantee that the HLPE process is encroached into a UN policy-making or policy-coordination process (whereas IAASTD was orphan of such a political platform).

III) The High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)

The High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created in October 2009 as an essential element of the reform of CFS, and as the scientific and knowledge-based pillar of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. It's functions, structure, composition, and reports are described in the approved reform document of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 2009/2 Rev.1, paragraphs

36 to 48) agreed on 17 October 2009 and in the rules and procedures for the work of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) agreed by the CFS Bureau in January 2010.

1) Functions and structure

The HLPE is not attached to any single UN organization, it is directly linked to CFS, which "shall serve as a forum in the United Nations system for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security" (FAO 2011). It is at the same time an element of CFS and interacting with it. This positioning reflects its very role of providing scientific and knowledge based expertise, independently of political influences, to serve political processes and decision making.

The main functions of the HLPE as stated in the CFS reform document are to:

- "*Assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes.*
- *Provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies.*
- *Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas*." (CFS 2009)

It is to serve as a policy-oriented interface between knowledge and policy, to provide policy relevant knowledge in order to help CFS get a better understanding on food security issues. Its assessment function contributes to legitimate the assessment and monitoring role of CFS itself, as called upon by civil society and NGO's (APRODEV, CIDSE 2009). The need for "a science based early warning for food security" (Barroso 2009) to identify future risks has been highlighted (Sarkozy 2008; G8 2008; APRODEV, CIDSE 2009) as key to enhancing prevention of future crisis. It is to describe this function that the model of IPCC is most often mentioned. The HLPE will have to perform here a proactive role (Swaminathan 2010).

It has two main components (CFS 2009):

- "*a Steering Committee composed of at least 10 and not exceeding 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields and led by a Chair and a Vice-Chair, who are responsible for the proper execution of the mandate given to the HLPE by the CFS*
- *Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the Steering Committee to analyze/report on specific issues*".

First proposals by the G8 for a scientific pillar of a Global Partnership for Food and Agriculture were for a "global network of high-level experts on food and agriculture" (G8 2008), later referring to the "scientific community" (G8 2009). Such loose formulations denote diverging views about the appropriate degree of formalisation and institutionalisation. FAO's intervention, described above, determined a more focused reflexion on the linked issues of institutionalisation and positioning of the scientific pillar of the GPAFS. Its first proposal has been for a "network of several hundred members" established by FAO (Diouf 2009). During the discussions about the reform of the CFS the issue was highly debated. Every option, from ad-hoc mobilisation of experts from the various UN organisations to more structured forms, often in reference to models such as IPCC and IAASTD has been on the negotiation table.

The structure finally agreed upon combines a Steering Committee, which is a permanent (renewed each 2 years) governing body interacting with CFS, and ad- hoc time-bound Project Teams selected by the Steering Committee within a broader community of experts. This structure (Fig. 1) is particularly adapted to the functions of the HLPE and to the field it has to cover. Being permanent gives it the necessary independence and legitimacy to build its own understanding, to defend positions and advices. It is all the more important to be able to perform its role of awareness raising on emerging issues and future risks.

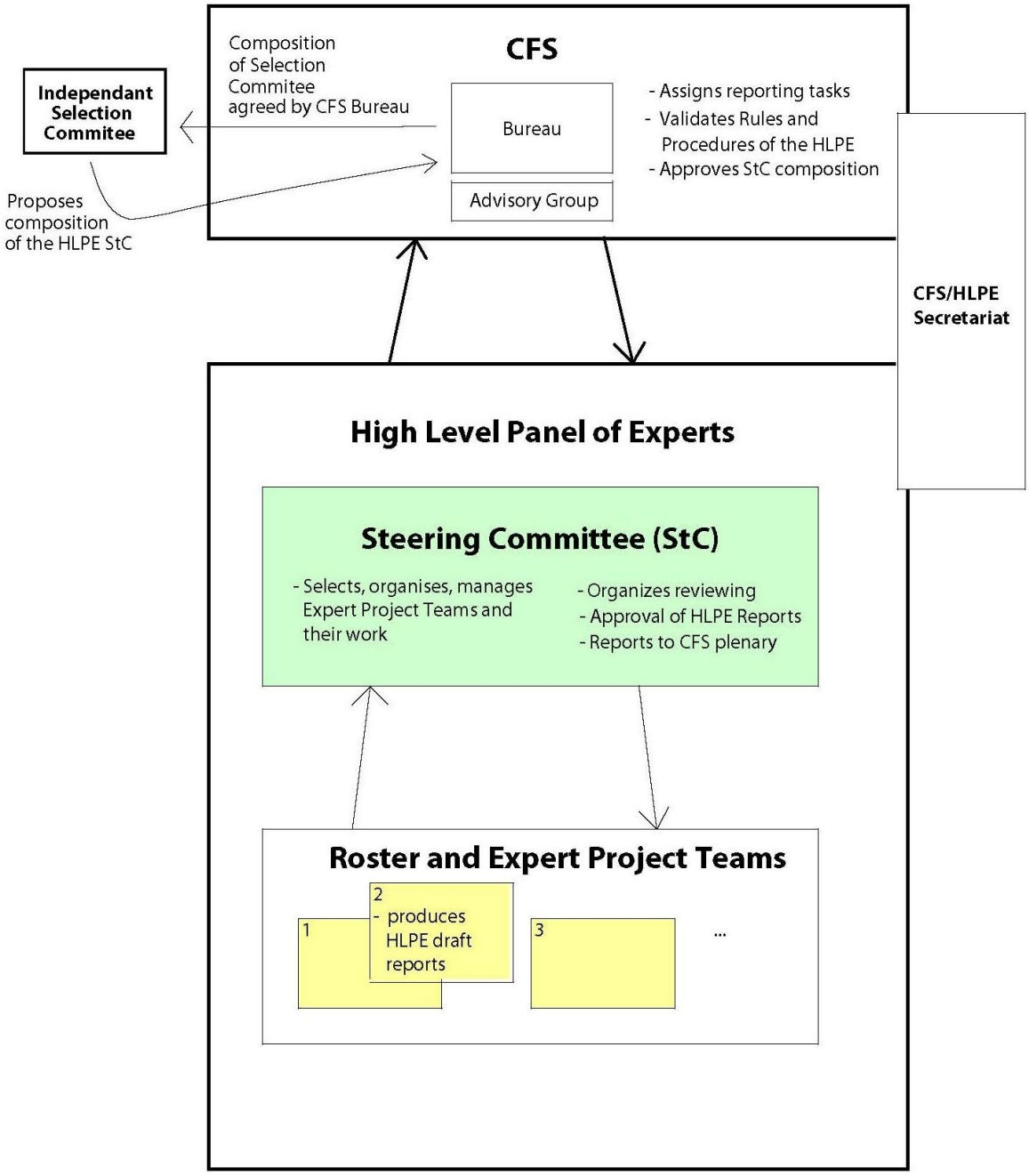

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the HLPE structure and its relations to the Committee on world Food Security (CFS)

Mobilising dedicated time-bound project teams gives it the means and flexibility to answer specific requests and to do so in the time frame needed for policy decision making; answering the need of sound expert advice to take quick informed action (von Braun 2010). This is a key feature of the HLPE with respect to the IPCC or the IAASTD, both having been criticized for their very long reporting times: 5 years for the IAASTD report, 7 years for the currently ongoing IPCC cycle. In turn the HLPE aims at annual or maximum biannual reporting times, and the 2 year lifetime (renewable once) of the HLPE Steering Committee has been set accordingly.

The concept of topic-bound project teams also gives the possibility to draw from a vast array of expertise, and thus to be able to address the huge variety of food security related issues.

2) Selection of the Steering Committee and Project Teams

The Steering Committee (StC), as per the CFS reform document (CFS 2009) "*should reflect an assortment of technical disciplines, regional expertise and representation. Ideal candidates will have relevant experience working with cross-disciplinary expert processes*". The Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE (CFS 2010) further detail this general objective: "*The members of the StC should be internationally recognized experts in their field related to food security and nutrition, and have broad vision and substantial experience in cross disciplinary expert processes. They should be experienced professionals, holding an advanced university degree, proven record of publications and/or solid background in field/research project management in the area of food security. Most importantly they should have strong experience in managing groups or networks of experts, extensive communication and inter‐personal skills, leadership skills, and, drawing from their international recognition by peers, the capacity to attract and draw expert networks. Members of the Steering Committee participate in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations. They serve for a 2 year period, renewable once. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the StC are elected by the StC among its members, for a 2 year period.*"

As decided by the CFS (CFS 2009), the selection of the members of the HLPE Steering Committee is carried out by an ad-hoc selection committee made up of representatives from FAO, WFP, IFAD, CGIAR/Bioversity and from the CSO/NGO community. The ad-hoc selection committee examines the nominations received by the Secretariat, and submit its recommendations to the CFS Bureau for approval.

The detail with which the selection of the members of the StC is treated in the HLPE rules and procedures (CFS 2010) is the sign of its importance to ensure the credibility and legitimacy of the process. It has been much discussed since the launch of the idea of a scientific pillar to the Global Partnership and particularly during the reform of CFS. Four crucial points were mentioned: independence, scientific credibility, balanced and inclusive representation and scientific diversity. APRODEV and CIDSE (2009), two international federations of development organisations stress that "the members of the HLPE should be independent of UN organisations, intergovernmental bodies, policy making institutions, and should not have any affiliations with the private sector and the philanthropic foundations. They should be nominated solely in their individual capacities."

The selection procedure in three steps, with nominations by member states and participants, selection by an independent committee including a representative of civil society and approval by the bureau is essential to protect independence of the members. It is reinforced by the short term of the mandate and the fact that it is only renewable once.

Interestingly, two weeks before the final negotiation on the CFS reform and on the creation of the HLPE, a High Level Expert Forum "How to feed the World in 2050" was convened in Rome by FAO on 12-13 October 2009. This forum was intended to feed debates at the world food summit to be organized one month later. But less expectedly, it gave one more opportunity to civil society organisations to voice their concerns about the way the HLPE should function. In a common statement, they regretted an excessive focus of the event on production needs and that the conclusions of the IAASTD had been ignored by the High Level Forum. They concluded: "As governments prepare a High Level Expert Panel for the Committee on World Food Security, they should make certain that a more thoughtful and inclusive process is followed to ensure comprehensive, reliable and credible advice is provided. The new CFS deserves better expert advice on how to feed the world" (CSO Statement 2009).

The issue of diversity of expertise both from a geographic and a discipline perspective have been highly discussed about the IPCC. Since its early stages developing country participation has been a main objective for IPCC (Agrawala 1998b) since, as Bert Bolin commented soon after he was asked to chair it, "credibility demands global representation". The rules were amended in 1993 to stipulate explicitly that for each chapter in the Second Assessment there should be at least one developing-country lead author. Yet, for each of the Second, Third and Fourth Assessment Reports of the IPCC, the percentage of both authors and reviewers from OECD countries has been remarkably constant at between 80 and 82% (Hulme and Mahony 2010). IAASTD succeeded in having for its global report a wide geographical distribution with half of lead and contributing authors from North America and Europe (Scoones 2008). Studies also show that the IPCC reports use references with strong discipline biases (Hulme and Mahony 2010), for instance the Third Assessment Report quoted only 12 per cent of peer reviewed articles from social sciences, a third of those from economics (Bjurström and Polk 2010). IAASTD explicitly aimed to assess "scientific, technical and socioeconomic literature" (IAASTD 2005).

The importance, for the HLPE, to draw upon a broad and diverse range of expertise is further highlighted by Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the right to food: "it is vital that this network includes specialists not only of agriculture and agro-ecology, but also nutritionists, climatologists, and social scientists, including human rights experts." (de Schutter 2009a). As it is impossible to have every scientific field related to food security represented in the StC the issue is also addressed by the two tiers structure of the HLPE which enables it to draw from a vast list of experts, given that "*Project Teams selected by the StC shall reflect the general principles of scientific and technical relevance, regional expertise and balanced geographic representation, as appropriate*" (CFS 2010).

3) Knowledge sources in the HLPE

From its very design, the HLPE does not conduct new research: "*to fulfil its mandate, it uses and synthesizes available world class academic and research knowledge, field project works, and practical applications and analyses. This knowledge will be drawn from among the various agencies, organizations, academic and research institutions, and among any other*

stakeholders involved in food security issues" (CFS 2009). The HLPE Rules and procedures further indicate that "sources of technical content, contributing documentation, data and assumptions used in the report should be properly referenced. Non published sources, reporting of field projects, or other non peer reviewed sources are accepted as relevant information sources, as far as their content is accessible to the HLPE and their quality is reviewed by the project team before incorporation in the HLPE report" (CFS 2010).

As we have seen the issue of knowledge and of the need to include a broader set of knowledge sources has been central during the discussions about the reform of CFS (see for instance de Schutter 2009c). The enlargement of participation in CFS was seen as key to it. To include diverse sources of knowledge into a scientific perspective brings new challenges. It has been a central issue in the IAASTD and participants recall that in the beginning it was designed to be using only scientific references and that the word "knowledge" has been added to show that agriculture uses local and traditional types of knowledge (de Lattre Gasquet 2009). IAASTD thus included "traditional and local knowledge" (IAASTD 2005). This, notes Scoones (2008), brought more claims illustrated by case studies, context-specific examples and personal testimonies of particular experiences, bringing into the expertise process a "different source of evidence, one based on experimental forms of expertise and a process of legitimation; not through an appeal to universal, global knowledge, but to the local and particular supported by diverse sources of empirical evidence."

The inclusion of reference to "social knowledge" in the HLPE Rules and procedures (art. 24) was essential to ensure credibility and legitimacy of the process for certain categories of stakeholders among which NGOs and representatives of smallholders. This is a move towards what Luca Colombo applauds as a process of legitimation of diffuse knowledge types, and which credentials culminated in the election of a representative of the Iranian civil society as vice chair of the HLPE (Colombo 2010, 2011). On the other hand such use of non-scientifically proofed sources risks damaging the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the assessment.

IPCC had already to confront this issue. To do so it devised procedures (IPCC, 1999) aiming at integrating "grey literature" sources in the realm of scientific sources by having them assessed and published by the author using them, marqued as non peer reviewed and considered as such by the reviewers. Thus the two cannons enabling critic by the scientific community and on which scientific legitimacy is founded are respected. IPCC included first not yet published sources than, gradually, "grey literature", although to a various extent depending on the topics. Peer-reviewed journal articles represented, in the 3rd Assessment Report, 84% of sources for Working Group I, the physical science basis, 59% for Working Group II, impacts adaptation and vulnerability, and 36% for Working Group III, mitigation of climate change (Bjurström and Polk 2010). The inclusion of non peer reviewed material has been questioned as having been seen as the source of a much publicised error about the shrinking of the Himalayan glaciers. The review of the process and procedures of the IPCC realized by the Interacademy Council (2010) concluded that "IPCC's procedures in this respect are adequate". The mistake occurred because they hadn't been properly followed. It recommends IPCC to strengthen and enforce its procedures.

The HLPE has deliberately adopted the same type of rules as the ones of the IPCC and the IAASTD regarding the validity of knowledge sources, which have been designed to meet credibility and legitimacy requirements of the scientific community and civil society.

4) HLPE Reports

By request of the CFS Plenary or Bureau, the HLPE StC has the responsibility to provide scientifically sound, comprehensive, clear and concise written reports/analyses on specific subjects for consideration at CFS Plenary sessions or inter-session meetings or activities. The CFS Bureau, with the support of the Steering Committee and in consultation with the Advisory Group, shall precisely formulate the nature of the expertise and advice requested by CFS. The StC has full responsibility to establish and manage the Project Teams, their working methodologies, and work plan.

The rules and procedures very precisely characterise what HLPE reports are to be. "*They shall normally be composed of two sections as follows: a short summary for policymakers and a main report. If necessary, supplementary material or annexes might be added to the report. A report is a critical, objective, policy relevant evaluation and analysis of information, including social knowledge, designed to support decision making. It applies the judgement of experts to existing knowledge to provide answers to policy relevant questions, quantifying the level of confidence where possible, and document controversies as appropriate. If they cannot be reconciled with a consensus, differing views or controversies on matters of a scientific, technical, or socio economic nature shall, as appropriate and if relevant to the policy debate, be represented and recorded in the report, and appropriately documented*" (CFS 2010).

The expert process aims to support CFS members and other stakeholders in decision making. It has therefore to be relevant to it both in substance and in the means by which the information is conveyed to CFS. It is here quite different from the IPCC which works independently of any mandate by the relevant international policy negotiation platform (the UNFCCC in that case), which is also the reason why a specific body, subsidiary to the UNFCCC, has been created to answer its specific scientific questions. The HLPE is here working to fulfil a precise mandate, given by CFS and its Bureau. It has to do it in such a form that is usable to support decision, providing answers to policy relevant questions, with a summary for policy makers.

Two intertwined issues are here of particular interest and importance as they have been heavily discussed about other processes: the level of confidence and the recording of controversies. In any advising process uncertainty is of course a key issue. Policy makers have to take decisions with sometimes uncertain findings; but in order to do so, they need to have, whenever possible, an assessment of the level of uncertainty, or of risk (Jasanoff 1992). The topic has been particularly discussed in IPCC as different working groups construct and communicate uncertainty in different ways (Hulme and Mahony 2010). It has also been one of the main points of the IPCC review by the Interacademy Council (2010) which recommended a qualitative assessment of the level of confidence. Acknowledging uncertainty makes it easier to accept not to achieve consensus. It is one of the great originalities and strength of the process that the report, not being approved by governments, doesn't have to be consensual. It can, and indeed must, record dissenting opinions. It is this possibility which legitimates and gives credibility to the principle of a broad view of different disciplines, different types of knowledge, different stakeholders. As Scoones (2008) remarks, there is in the discussion of the IAASTD "an interesting contradiction in the simultaneous talk of engagement and involvement of diverse, multi-stakeholder perspectives and its confrontation with the ideal of consensus and an appeal to a universalised objectivity of science and expertise: the ultimate global vision". It is then to the policy makers to use this information, with its known uncertainties and contradictions, to build a political consensus.

HLPE's rules and procedures also detail the report review process, whereby "*the draft report of a Project Team is submitted for external review to experts not involved in the preparation of the report. To do so, the StC shall designate, with Secretariat assistance, two Review Editors, who will submit the draft report for review to a set of individual experts (reviewers) with significant expertise in the area covered by the report. The list of report reviewers shall be decided by the Review Editors, in consultation with the StC and the Team Leader, with Secretariat assistance, considering the need for a range of views, expertise, and geographical representation of reviewers. Reviewers shall execute their task in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations. Production of the revised draft report is under responsibility of the Team leader and the Review Editors, under StC oversight, taking into account reviewers' comments*" (CFS 2010).

The reviewing process is key to scientific legitimacy and credibility. It constructs HLPE's production as proper scientific works, inside the scientific world and rules, as in the HLPE there is no governmental review as in some other processes such as the IPCC and IAASTD where line by line approval of government is sought for the summary for policy makers. As Scoones (2008) remarks about IAASTD "in international assessment processes of this sort much of the hardwork comes with the review and editing process".

The publication of HLPE reports does not involve governmental clearance: "Prior to their publication and distribution, HLPE reports shall be approved by the StC on the basis alone of conformity to the request of the CFS and observation of proper quality standards and the review process. The content of final reports do not represent at any stage official views of CFS or its members and participants. After approval by the HLPE StC, only grammatical and/or minor editorial changes can be made prior to publication" (CFS 2010).

Rules for publication definitely establish the HLPE's reports as scientific objects, giving credit to their authors, to review editors, published under the responsibility of the HLPE, and clearly made publicly available. This gives them scientific legitimacy and credibility for the various stakeholders. Publication is essential to the transparency of policy making. It is in line with the request of NGOs, especially of those working on the right to food, to have evidence, because "to be effective, public pressure needs to be evidence based" (Windfuhr et al. 2009).

5) HLPE Secretariat

While the HLPE is a new body, born as part of the reform of the governance of world food security, it is also the only new one so created, since importantly one of the principle of the creation of the GPAFS was not to create new institution but to build and reform existing ones. Therefore, member states were careful to ensure that the creation of the HLPE would not be accompanied by a bureaucratic secretariat, or an administration in its most classic forms.

The joint HLPE/CFS Secretariat, located within FAO, shall assist the work of the HLPE StC and its Chair. As defined by the CFS (2010), "*Its functions include, though are not limited to: assist with the preparation of working budget and establishment of trust funds, maintain a roster of experts, organize meetings of the HLPE StC and assist Project Teams, as needed, assist with the preparation of other support documentation, liaise as appropriate between the CFS Bureau and the HLPE Steering Committee, maintain a system of communications, including posting of relevant reports and analyses. The Secretariat comprises, among others, a senior staff, coordinator of the HLPE, responsible for day to day management and oversight*

of the project. HLPE funding is channelled through a multidonor voluntary trust fund hosted at FAO, to which Member States and other CFS participants are encouraged to contribute."

Analysis of expert processes has often devoted less interest to the role and functions of their secretariat. A first reason is probably that, as most of national expert processes were first established to advise institutional bodies, these administrations were themselves expected to perform the support of the process in itself. Secretariat functions were thus not identified as such, which didn't enable to see how key they are to the implementation of any science policy mechanism. The review of IPCC also examined its secretariat, and recommended the creation of an executive director, as in the IAASTD, having the full confidence of the Chair and who can act on his or her behalf as needed. It acknowledges the need, given the fact that the IPCC Chair is part-time, to deal on his behalf with the operational tasks of the secretariat, to network and to communicate (Interacademy Council 2010).

The issue of the CFS and HLPE Secretariats gave way to important discussions during the reform. The CFS Secretariat is a joint FAO/IFAD/WFP secretariat, materializing the cooperation between the three Rome-based UN agencies dealing with food security related issues. It receives funding from the regular budget of these agencies. The HLPE Secretariat is distinct from the CFS Secretariat, let alone because it is funded independently, through voluntary contributions only (similarly to the IPCC or the IAASTD). This independence of financing of the HLPE Secretariat guarantees the independence of the HLPE process from UN agencies. The fact that Member States have requested that the HLPE Secretariat, yet independent, would be "joint" to the CFS Secretariat, highlights the importance they attached to the effective coordination of CFS and HLPE processes.

6) HLPE Work Programme

The work programme of the HLPE is determined by the CFS. The CFS reform document lists the functions performed by the HLPE "*as directed by the CFS Plenary and Bureau*" (CFS 2009). However, the CFS, in defining these very functions, has recognized that the HLPE could be in a position to exert a pro-active role to "*identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas*". Therefore, work programme of the HLPE results of a two-way process, both demand-driven through a direct mandate from CFS; and supply-driven, through a possible role for the HLPE to identify what it considers as the major emerging and strategic issues for policy advice and recommendations, and submit those to the consideration of the CFS.

The first work programme of the HLPE was discussed before CFS 36, within the CFS Bureau, and decided at CFS 36 (Box 1). Because the HLPE is mandated to produce policy advice and recommendations to be discussed at CFS, any decision of work program of the HLPE impacts the future work program of the CFS. This is why the definition of the work programme of the HLPE is a political debate in itself, testified by the fact that it was negotiated word by word by delegations at CFS Plenary up to an advanced hour of the night. This is also why a short and challenging one-year deadline for reporting was requested to the HLPE on the agreed topics, so that the work of the HLPE is able to fit in, and contribute to, the political agenda.

As a result, the CFS 36 has entrusted the HLPE with a strong mandate, requesting it to undertake studies and present policy recommendations on a wide range of outstanding issues for the world's food and nutrition security, including land tenure and international

investments in agriculture, price volatility, social safety nets and climate change (see box below). In addition, the HLPE may provide input on priority issues identified by the CFS in the consultative process that CFS 36 agreed to launch with the aim to develop the first version of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF). Finally, the CFS Bureau has requested the HLPE to be consulted in 2011 in the process of elaboration of the draft Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources.

Box 1 Verbatim from the CFS 36 final report, paragraphs 26-27

The Committee requested the HLPE to undertake studies, to be presented at the 37th Session of the CFS, on the following important issues, in accordance with the CFS reform document agreed in 2009, and the Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE:

Land tenure and international investment in agriculture :
the respective roles of large-scale plantations and of small-scale farming, including economic, social, gender and environmental impacts;
review of the existing tools allowing the mapping of available land;
comparative analysis of tools to align large scale investments with country food security strategies

Price volatility :
all of its causes and consequences, including market distorting practices and links to financial markets, and appropriate and coherent policies, actions, tools and institutions to manage the risks linked to excessive price volatility in agriculture. This should include prevention and mitigation for vulnerable producers, and consumers, particularly the poor, women and children, that are appropriate to different levels (local, national, regional and international) and are based on a review of existing studies. The study should consider how vulnerable nations and populations can ensure access to food when volatility causes market disruptions.

Social protection :
ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets programs and policies with respect to food and nutritional security, taking into consideration differing conditions across countries and regions. This should include a review of the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children. It should also take into account benefits for improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition.

Climate change :
review existing assessments and initiatives on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition, with a focus on the most affected and vulnerable regions and populations and the interface between climate change and agricultural productivity, including the challenges and opportunities of adaptation and mitigation policies and actions for food security and nutrition.

Interestingly, these topics are very close to those mentioned for CFS at the Dublin meeting in may 2010 during which David Nabarro elicited comments from civil society organizations on the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) (Gimenez E. H. 2010). There has also been throughout 2010, and outside the CFS perimeter, strong political involvement to introduce

specific topics: The Final Statement of the Berlin Agriculture Ministers Summit of the 16th of January 2010 called for the HLPE to "be commissioned this year to carry out a study on agriculture, food security and climate change". Also, the "Roadmap for action" which came out of the Global Conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change in The Hague (2010) pointed to the request to the HLPE of a study on food security and climate change. This testifies to the confidence, or at least the interest, in the process, well outside CFS's boundaries.

IV) Discussion : Understanding jointly

For food security, even if international coordination is crucial, decisions and policies are mostly national sovereignty prerogatives. It has no power to enforce decisions at national level. It has a policy advice and recommendation role at international level. Therefore, the effectiveness on the ground depends on all the stakeholders sharing a common understanding of the issues and the way to address them. We show below that there are two ways by which the common understanding is constructed, which are also the ones by which it will have an effect on the ground.

The first way to common understanding lies in the inclusiveness of the CFS itself: the fact that decisions by CFS are taken by Member States in co-construction with various stakeholders, in particular CSOs, NGOs and the private sector, ensures that these decisions gain resonance and efficiency on the ground. The inclusiveness is a reality for plenary discussions but also between sessions through the Advisory Group of the CFS, whereby the different non-governmental constituencies are represented, and trough the "mechanism" that the Civil Society Organizations have put in place to organize their role in the CFS.

The second way lies in the HLPE and in its role to bring shared, independent, and comprehensive advice to the debate. The HLPE can support the policy coherence of different categories of stakeholders at different levels, because it conveys information that is at the same time shared, independent and comprehensive. These three attributes of the advice provided by the HLPE go hand in hand. The advice must be independent, in the sense that is is not carried by a participant to the CFS. The advice must be comprehensive in the sense that it describes the complete rationale that supports it. The advice must be shared in the sense that it will serve as a common source and reference for discussion. This triple requirement implies that, in case of controversies, the role of the HLPE is not to resolve the issue at all cost in favour of one party or another, but to elucidate and confront the different streams of information even if this shall lead to competing streams of advice.

Thus, the enlargement of the CFS to new participants and the creation of the High Level Panel of Experts both contribute to endow the CFS with a "collective learning function", the deficiency of which Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the right to food, diagnosed as one of the reasons for our failure to eradicate hunger and malnutrition (de Schutter, 2009c). As underlined by Miller (2007), knowledge processes of reasoning and deliberation have proved to be essential to the sanctioned critique of decision making in national and international contexts, and to contribute to assert democratic constraints on the exercise of power.

In the CFS the two ways towards a common understanding are clearly delineated. While there is a general trend in expert processes to open up the process of knowledge making to non-

scientific groups, and while the HLPE recognizes that "knowledge from social actors" is a valid source of knowledge under certain conditions that allows it to be appropriately documented, the rules and procedures of the HLPE nevertheless define a space protected from political or decision motivated intervention. In this space, the HLPE operates as a scientific body, independent inasmuch as it exerts its scientific activity and produces its reports and advices, founded on scientifically credible knowledge, legitimated according to recognized scientific procedures. Its reports are published and produced as scientific works.

In other words, the legitimacy and credibility of the HLPE are of a scientific nature and shall be assessed as such. Nonetheless, in order to partake of this common understanding which creates the conditions for decision making, HLPE reports and advices have also to be legitimate and credible to all stakeholders involved in the decision making process. This double tension, or double constraint, scientific legitimacy and credibility on the one side, and "social" legitimacy and credibility on the other side, will among others imply that the HLPE defines its own and necessarily new methods to take into account "knowledge from social actors", in a way that respects scholastic methods.

Conclusion

The establishment of the HLPE as part of the reform of CFS is a major step in modifying the way food and nutrition issues are addressed by the international community. The creation of a scientific body specially dedicated to food and nutrition security acknowledges the need to mobilize knowledge from various disciplines, fields and sources in order to understand and better address it. As such it has the potential to orient the constitution of a scientific community in the various fields where food and nutrition topics are considered. Such a community, directed towards providing knowledge for action, would be in itself a major step. It "can foster the emergence of a coalition of the concerned with reference to elimination of hunger" (Swaminathan 2010).

The constitution of such an expert body, permanent and independent of any single institution, constitutes "food and nutrition security" as an object of concern and understanding independently of any single point of view. Thus it separates knowledge and action to constitute understanding as independent from decision making. It is this separation which enables to frame a collective understanding which embraces controversies, uncertainties and various points of view.

The HLPE is directly linked to the foremost international policy platform for food security and nutrition, the CFS. The design of the HLPE process, its rules and procedures, the composition of the Steering Committee and the commissioning of studies is decided by the CFS. The HLPE is therefore created and entrusted by the CFS, and reports to it. This ensures the legitimacy and relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political agenda at international level. Thus the HLPE is both independent from, and part of, the decision making process. The legitimacy and credibility of the process, from both a scientific and a democratic point of view will be established by the detail of the interrelations between the HLPE and the CFS.

The HLPE has been entrusted by the CFS with a very strong mandate. As framed by Pr Swaminathan in his first speech as Chair of the Steering Committee "it is solution and success oriented knowledge that is now urgently needed". The challenge for the HLPE is now to

deliver to such high expectations. The challenge for CFS is to build upon this input towards decision making.

D. J. Shaw (2007), in his History on World Food Security since 1945 notes that "The complexity of food security as a multi-dimensional and multisectoral concept has been a major barrier in reaching consensus on how to define and achieve it, and lack of agreement on effective policy prescriptions has resulted in inadequate concerted and coordinated national and global action". The establishment of the HLPE can contribute to build a common understanding, and thus to overcome a barrier in reaching consensus on how to define and achieve food security. It can be a major step towards policy coherence and coordinated action.

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